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**CC:**  
**Subject:** Scranton Times-Tribune (7-26) EPA to stop Dimock Twp. water deliveries

# **EPA to stop Dimock Twp. water deliveries**

By Laura Legere (Staff Writer)  
Published: July 26, 2012

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will end water deliveries to four homes in Dimock Township after a repeat round of sampling found that elevated manganese in one water well could be treated to safe levels.

The announcement Wednesday ends the agency's sampling effort in the Susquehanna County township where past tests raised concerns that nearby Marcellus Shale drilling may have contaminated water supplies and created a health risk.

The EPA's tests found no contamination "that would give EPA reason to take further action," Regional Administrator Shawn M. Garvin said in a statement.

The EPA said its testing of wells serving 64 homes between January and June found the hazardous substances arsenic, barium or manganese in well water at five homes at levels that could present a health concern.

But the agency said that in each of those cases the residents currently have or will have a treatment system that can treat the contaminants to acceptable levels at the tap. It also noted that those contaminants, which it has said can be associated with natural gas drilling, "are also naturally occurring substances."

The state Department of Environmental Protection determined in 2009 that faulty gas wells drilled by Cabot Oil and Gas Corp. allowed methane to seep into 18 Dimock water supplies, but the EPA began its own sampling this year after the agency's review of past test results raised concerns about additional contamination.

Cabot contends that the methane and other contaminants in Dimock water wells are natural phenomena unrelated to its operations.

"As with the three previous sets of water samples compiled by EPA at private drinking water wells in Dimock, the data released today once again confirms the EPA's and DEP's findings that levels of contaminants found do not possess a threat to human health and the environment," Cabot

spokesman George Stark said in a statement.

The EPA said it is working with residents at the four homes where it has been delivering replacement water on a schedule to disconnect the alternate water supplies.

Scott Ely, one of the homeowners receiving deliveries, said he has been told by several consultants that the high pH level in his water would make it expensive to treat.

"I have no plans; I have no system," he said. EPA's repeated tests of his water found arsenic, chromium, lithium and sodium above a level flagged for a toxicologist's review. He said that the EPA representative who delivered his most recent test results told him "off the record" not to drink or bathe in his water, but that the agency will remove the bulk water tank at his home by Aug. 6.

In a written response to questions, the EPA said its staff "did not have any 'off the record' conversations with residents" and that its risk assessors "thoroughly reviewed all sampling results, comparing them to risk-based levels, and concluded that none of the levels presented a health concern."

Jean Carter, whose grandchildren live in two homes connected to a single water supply with high levels of methane and manganese, said that while a treatment system reduces the metal in the water, she needs another system to remove the gas.

"It's a real mess," she said, "and we just don't know what to do because it takes so much money to do these things."

The natural gas industry welcomed the EPA announcement as the last word on the agency's investigation, which it had criticized as an intrusion in a matter typically regulated by the state.

"We are very pleased that EPA has arrived upon these fact-based findings," Marcellus Shale Coalition president Kathryn Klaber said, "and that we're now able to close this chapter once and for all."

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